ØYVIND TORSETER

THE HEARTLESS TROLL

To Edle, Alma, Oline and Une

This contemporary retelling is loosely based on the Norwegian fairytale
"The Troll With No Heart In His Body" by Asbjørnsen and Moe.

enchantedlion.com

First edition, published in 2016 by Enchanted Lion Books,
351 Van Brunt Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231
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Originally published in Norway as *Mulegutten*
Copyright © 2016 by Kari Dickson for the English-language translation
Book Design: Øyvind Torseter

A CIP record is on file with the Library of Congress. ISBN 978-1-59270-193-3
Printed in China by RR Donnelley Asia Printing Solutions Ltd.

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THE HEARTLESS TROLL

Translated from the Norwegian by Kari Dickson

ENCHANTED LION BOOKS
NEW YORK

here once was a king who had seven sons. This king loved his sons so much that he couldn't bear to be without them even for a minute, so he always had at least one at his side. Before long, however, his sons grew into fine young men and were ready to find wives. The king had no choice but to let the first six go, but he insisted that Prince Fred, the seventh and youngest, stay at home with him. And so it was that Prince Fred's brothers promised to return with a bride for him too.

As parting gifts, the king gave each of his six oldest sons the most resplendent clothes they had ever seen and fine, strong steeds that galloped as swift as the wind. Then, with many tears and fond farewells, the brothers set off.

After visiting many royal households and meeting many princesses, the brothers finally arrived at the grand court of a king whose six daughters were so beautiful that the brothers proposed immediately. Happily, each was accepted and so, with their betrotheds on their swift steeds, the brothers set out for home. But they were so wrapped up in their new loves that they forgot their promise to return with a bride for their brother as well.

After traveling a good distance, they came to a steep cliff where a terrible troll lived. The troll was so terrible that the minute the princes and princesses were within sight, he turned them all to stone.

The king anxiously awaited the return of his six sons, but he never saw any sign of their approach on the horizon. Bereft, he wept and wailed and mourned their loss, saying he would never be happy again.

"If you weren't here," he would tell Prince Fred, "I wouldn't be able to live, so heartbroken am I at the loss of your brothers."

"Well, why don't I set out to find them?" Prince Fred would reply, to which his father always exclaimed, "This I forbid! For you too will only disappear."

But Prince Fred wanted so desperately to set out and see the world, and he begged and pleaded for so long, that in the end his father had no choice but to let him go. All the king had left to give him for his journey was a nervous nag of a horse with a hobble, but that didn't deter Prince Fred one bit. When the day of his departure finally arrived, the prince kissed his father, climbed onto the old nag and set off, overjoyed to be seeing the world at last.

GOODBYE, FATHER!
I REALLY DONT WANT TO DO THIS.
I WILL RETURN ONE SUNNY DAY!
AND I WILL BRING MY BROTHERS WITH ME.
DO WE REALLY HAVE TO GO? I'M SURE THEY CAN FIND THEIR OWN WAY HOME.

WHEN PRINCE FRED HAD TRAVELED A FAIR DISTANCE HE CAME TO A STREAM.

A SAXOPHONE! HMMM, COULD BE USEFUL...

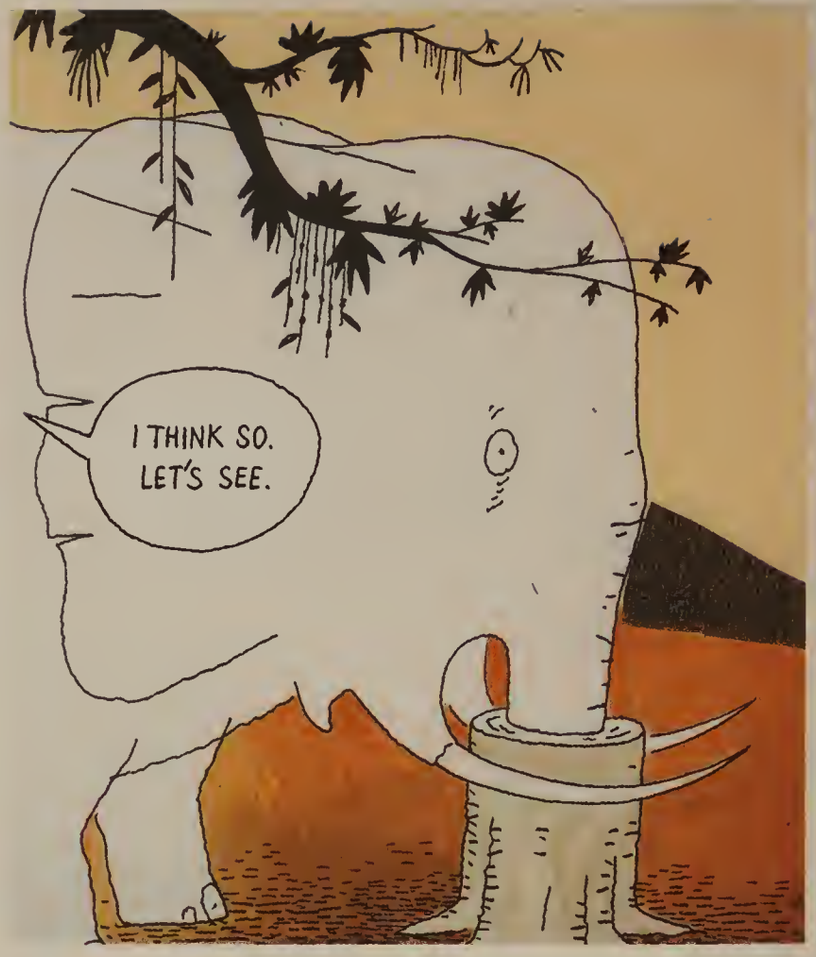
I'VE GOT ROOM IN MY KNAPSACK.
YEAH, IF YOU GET RID OF YOUR OTHER JUNK.

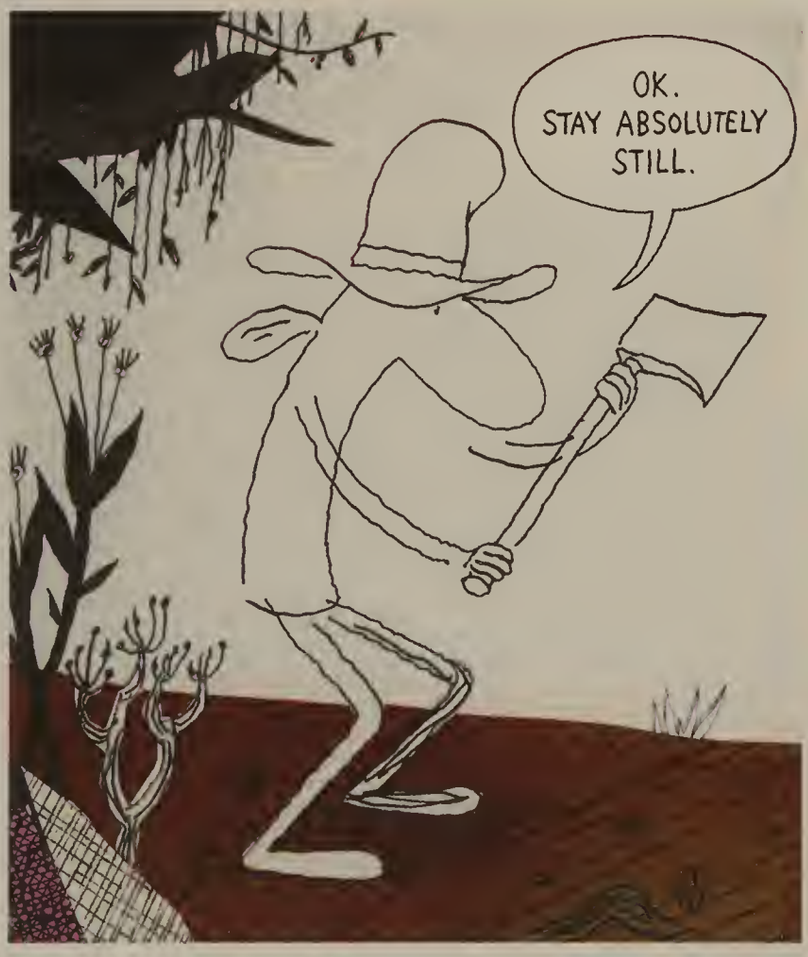
OFF WE GO!

LOOK! WHAT'S THAT?

DEAR FRIENDS, MIGHT YOU HELP ME OUT OF THIS FIX?

DID YOU BRING AN AXE?


I THINK SO. LET'S SEE.


OK. STAY ABSOLUTELY STILL.

WE'LL SOON HAVE YOU FREED!

THWACK

A THOUSAND THANKS FOR YOUR HELP. IF YOU COME ACROSS ANY OBSTACLES ON YOUR JOURNEY, SIMPLY THINK OF ME AND I WILL HELP YOU IN RETURN.
THANK YOU, MR. ELEPHANT.

DID YOU HEAR THAT NOISE? MAYBE WE SHOULD TURN BACK?
NO WAY! LET'S SET UP CAMP AND HAVE SOME FOOD.

DO YOU THINK THERE ARE WOLVES HERE?
NOPE, HIGHLY UNLIKELY.

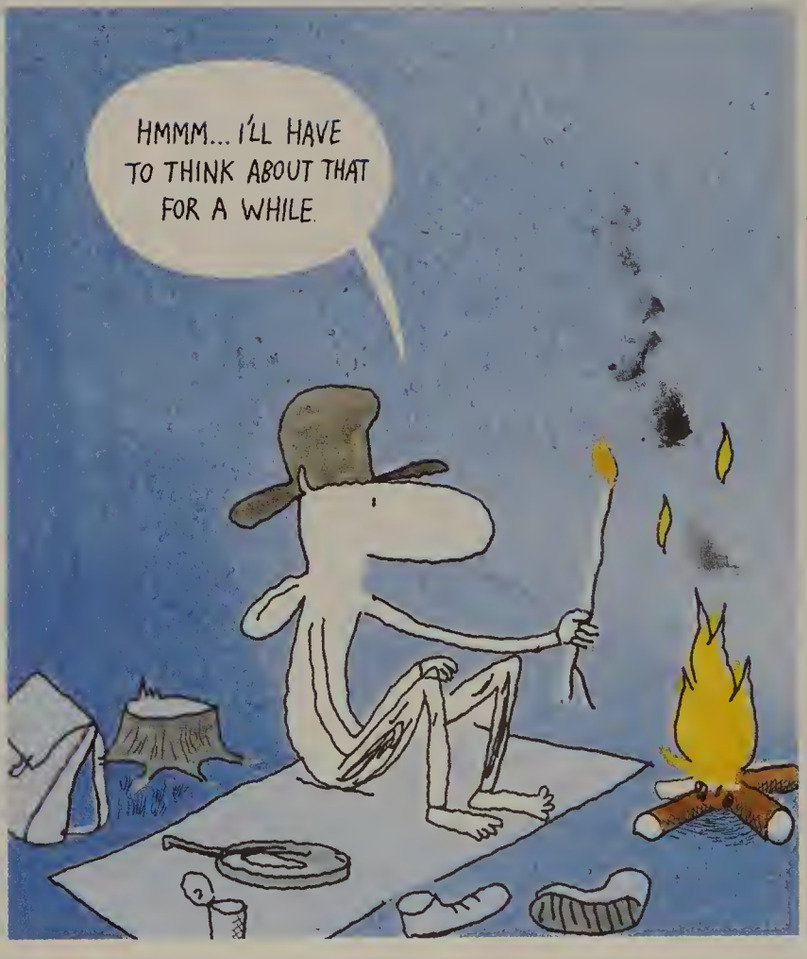
I KEEP THINKING ABOUT WOLVES.
RELAX. THERE AREN'T ANY WOLVES HERE!

DID SOMEONE CRY WOLF?

CAN I EAT YOUR HORSE? I'M SO HUNGRY MY STOMACH IS ROARING. I HAVEN'T EATEN FOR AT LEAST A WEEK.

NO, YOU CAN'T EAT MY HORSE, BECAUSE THEN I'D HAVE NOTHING TO RIDE ON.

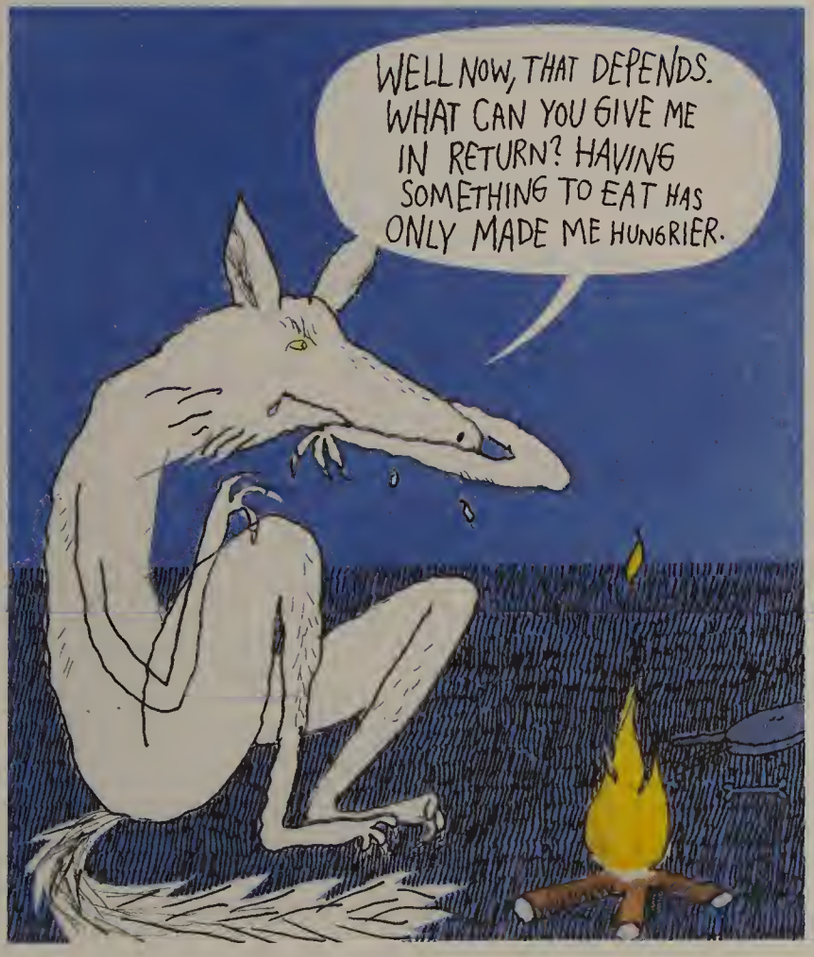
YOU CAN RIDE ON ME.
AND I CAN ALSO HELP YOU WHEN YOU'RE IN DESPERATE NEED.


HMMM... I'LL HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A WHILE.

YES, TAKE YOUR TIME. MEANWHILE, ÍLL JUST HAVE A LITTLE NIBBLE.
STOP! WHAT AM I THINKING? WE HAVE LOTS OF FOOD!

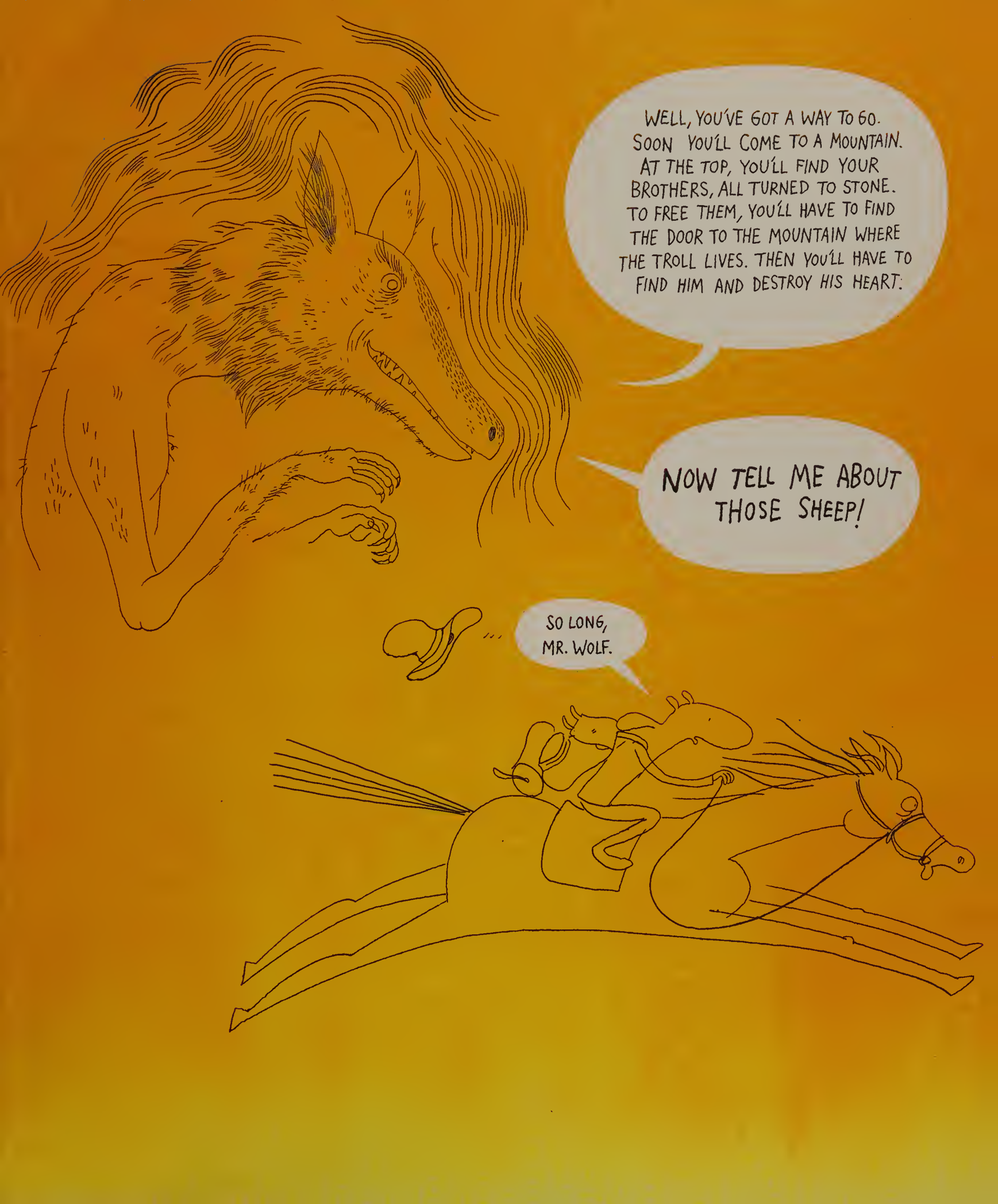
THIS IS CHICKEN, ISN'T IT? WHERE ARE YOU GOING ANYWAY?

WE'RE GOING TO FREE MY SIX BROTHERS WHO WERE CAPTURED BY THE TROLL. WOULD YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE THE TROLL LIVES?


WELL NOW, THAT DEPENDS. WHAT CAN YOU GIVE ME IN RETURN? HAVING SOMETHING TO EAT HAS ONLY MADE ME HUNGRIER.

DO YOU LIKE SHEEP? WE PASSED SOME A WHILE BACK.

LOVE 'EM. WHEREABOUTS?
TELL ME WHERE THE TROLL LIVES FIRST. THEN I'LL TELL YOU.


WELL, YOU'VE GOT A WAY TO GO. SOON YOU'LL COME TO A MOUNTAIN. AT THE TOP, YOU'LL FIND YOUR BROTHERS, ALL TURNED TO STONE. TO FREE THEM, YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND THE DOOR TO THE MOUNTAIN WHERE THE TROLL LIVES. THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND HIM AND DESTROY HIS HEART.
NOW TELL ME ABOUT THOSE SHEEP!
SO LONG, MR. WOLF.

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, PRINCE FRED ARRIVED AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN.

IT'S PROBABLY BEST IF I STAY HERE TO KEEP WATCH. IF YOU GET REALLY STUCK, JUST THINK OF ME AND I'LL BE THERE.
BUT ONLY IF IT'S A CRISIS, MIND YOU.

WHEN PRINCE FRED ARRIVED AT THE TROLL'S DOOR, HE SAW HIS BROTHERS WHO HAD, INDEED, BEEN TURNED TO STONE, JUST AS THE WOLF HAD SAID.

THE DOOR INTO THE MOUNTAIN WAS OPEN, SO PRINCE FRED WENT IN.

SLAM
ANOTHER ONE!
HE'LL NEVER GET OUT ALIVE!
HEHEHE.

VERY CHATTY
GHOSTS IN HERE.

WHO MIGHT YOU BE?
AND WHY HAVE YOU COME?

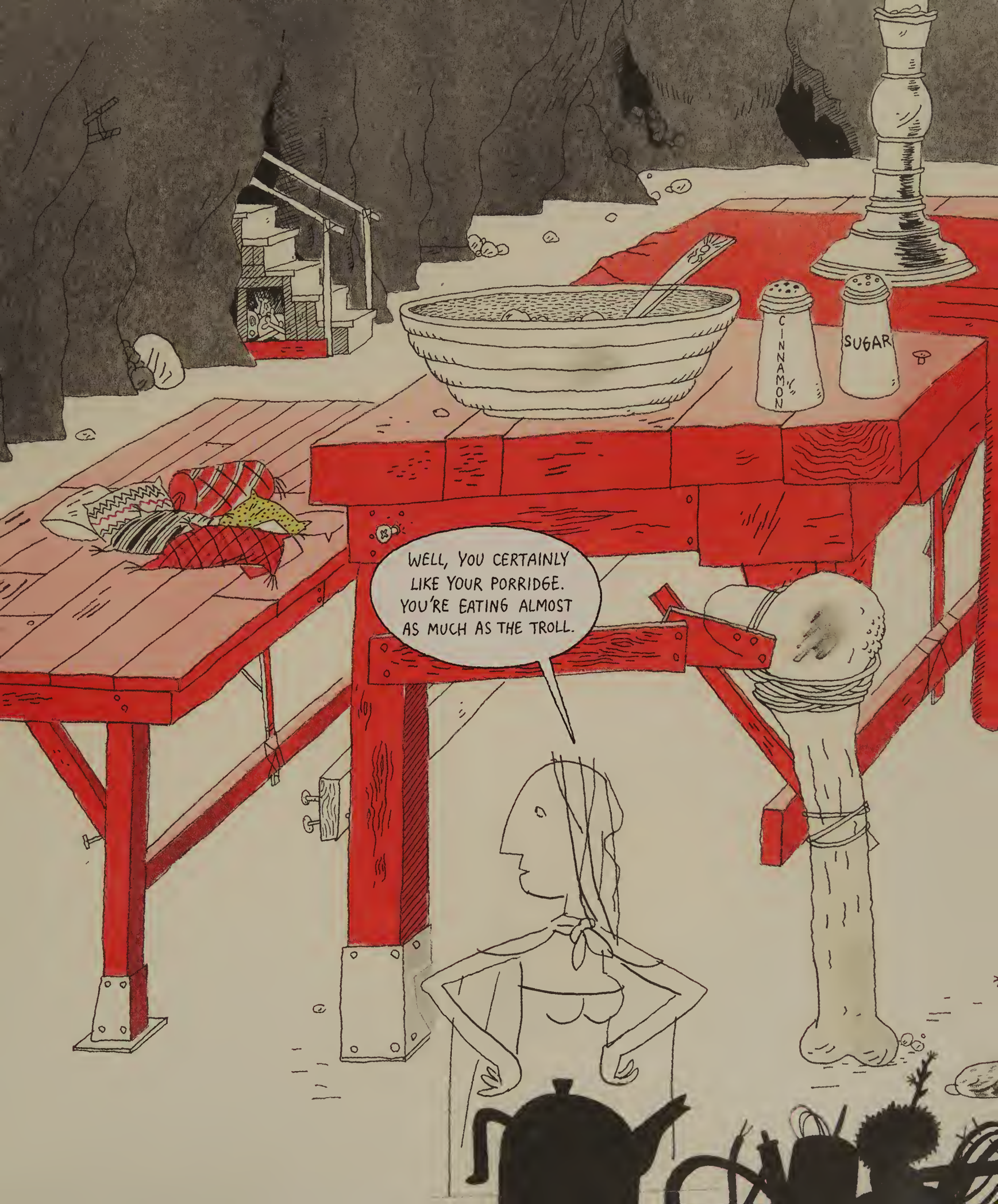
DON'T WORRY, FAIR PRINCESS, I'LL SAVE YOU...
...FROM THE TROLL.
PLENTY HAVE TRIED BEFORE YOU.
BUT NO ONE LEAVES HERE ALIVE. SEEMS THERE'S NO WAY TO GET RID OF THE TROLL.

I'D STILL BE GLAD TO SHOW YOU AROUND BEFORE HE KILLS YOU.

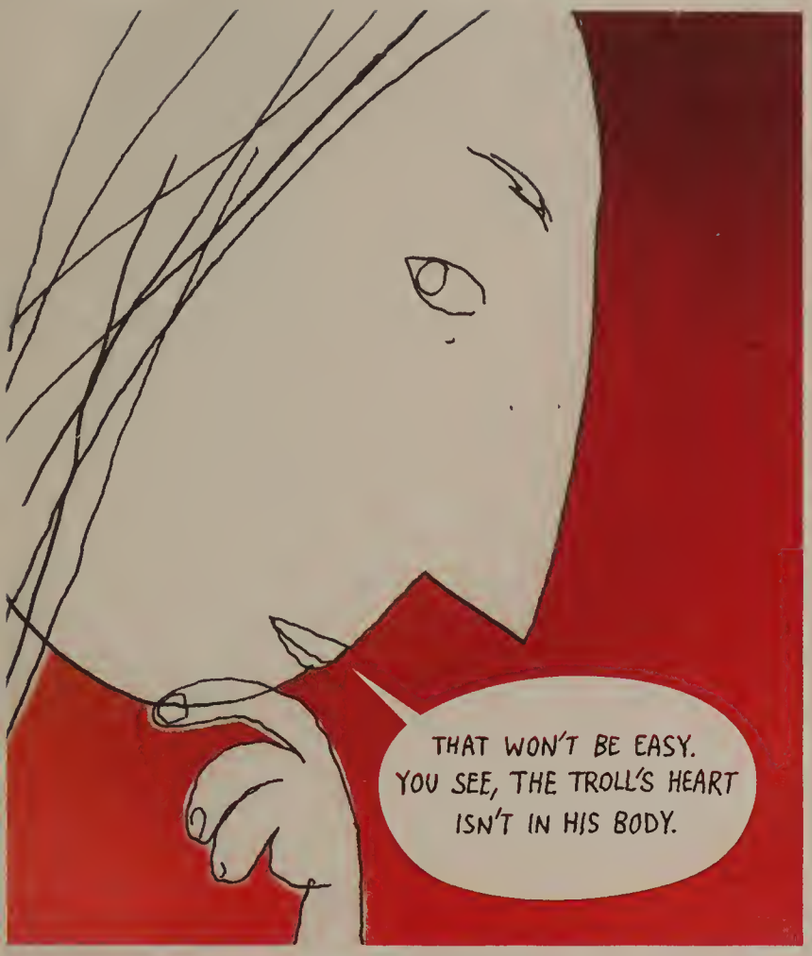
HEHEHE.

YOU DON'T SAY MUCH, DO YOU?

I'M HUNGRY. DO YOU HAVE ANY FOOD?
WE'VE GOT PORRIDGE.

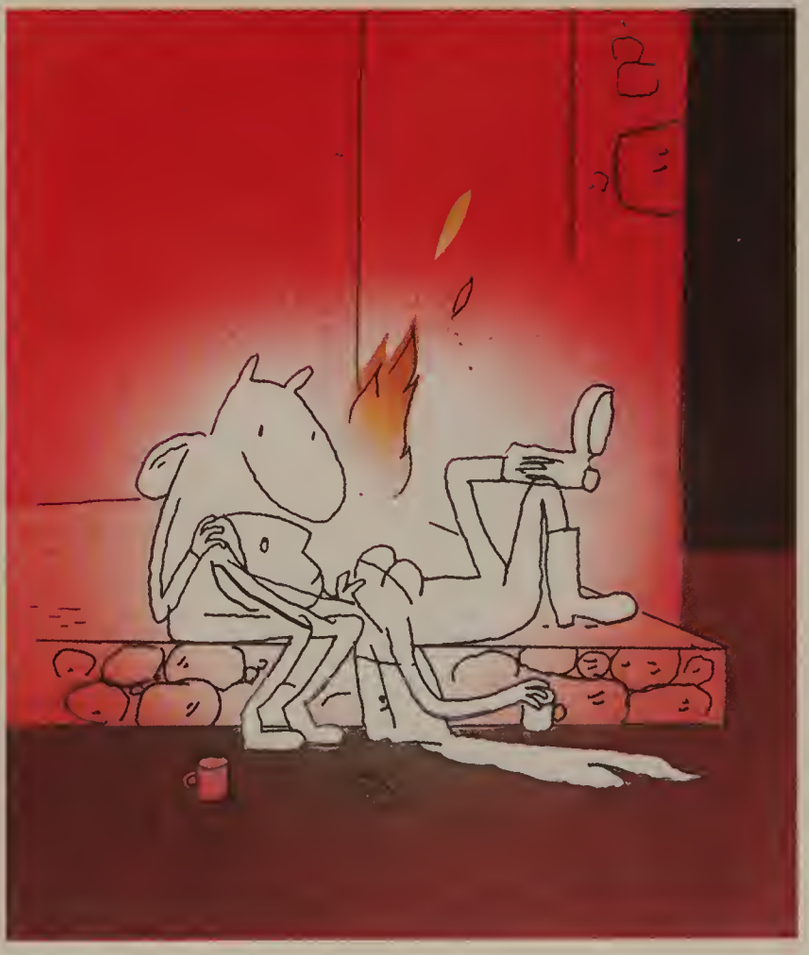

CINNAMON
SUGAR
WELL, YOU CERTAINLY LIKE YOUR PORRIDGE. YOU'RE EATING ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE TROLL.

THE WOLF SAID I'D HAVE TO DESTROY THE TROLL'S HEART TO SET EVERYONE FREE.


THAT WON'T BE EASY. YOU SEE, THE TROLL'S HEART ISN'T IN HIS BODY.

AND NO ONE KNOWS WHERE HE'S HIDDEN IT.
BEING HERE IS CERTAIN DEATH.

YAAAAWN!



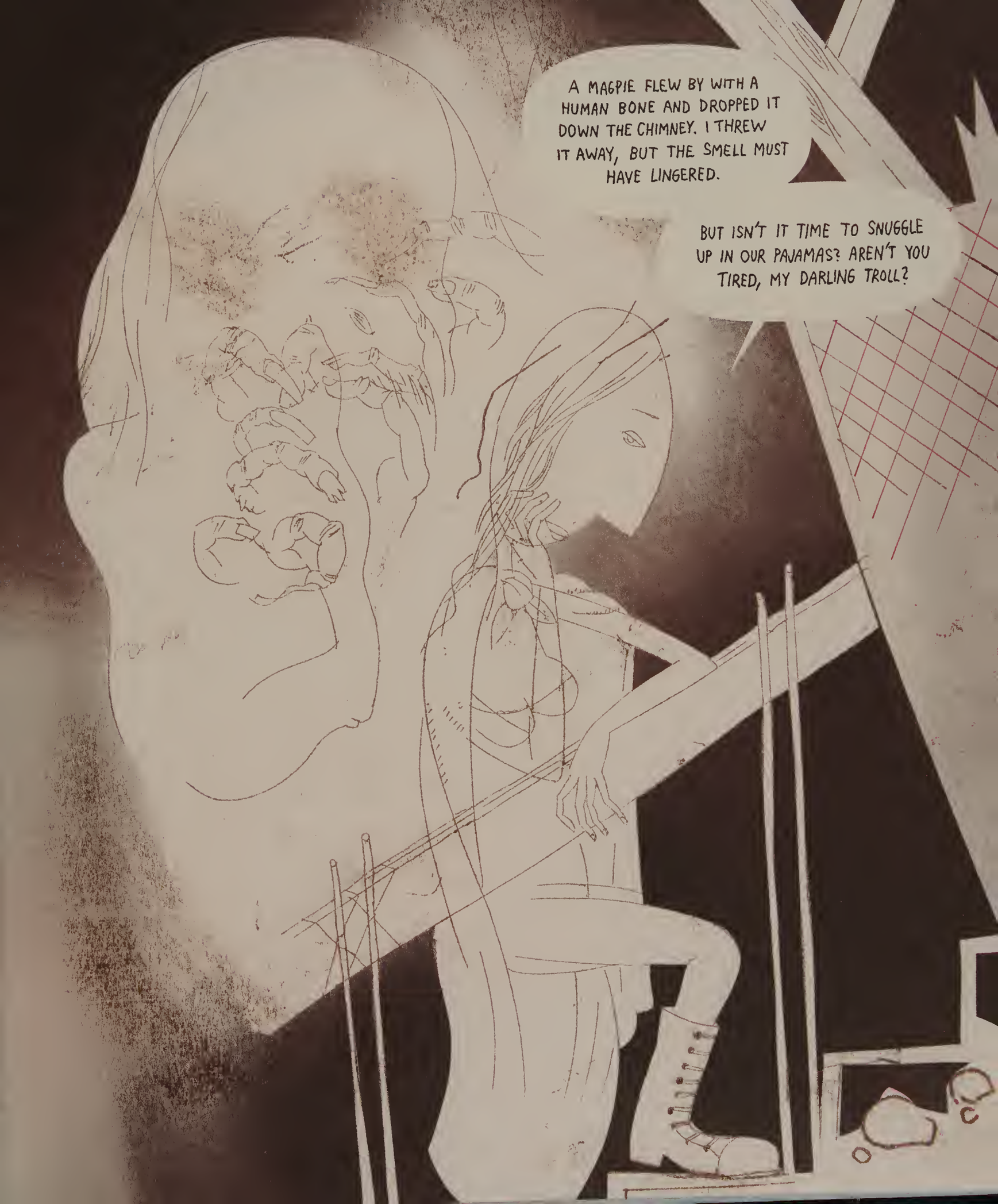
COME WITH ME, I'VE GOT AN IDEA!

I THINK I KNOW HOW WE CAN FIND OUT WHERE THE TROLL KEEPS HIS HEART.

HIDE UNDER THE BED AND LISTEN TO OUR CONVERSATION BEFORE WE GO TO SLEEP. BUT YOU HAVE TO LIE COMPLETELY STILL. NOT EVEN THE TINIEST MOVEMENT.

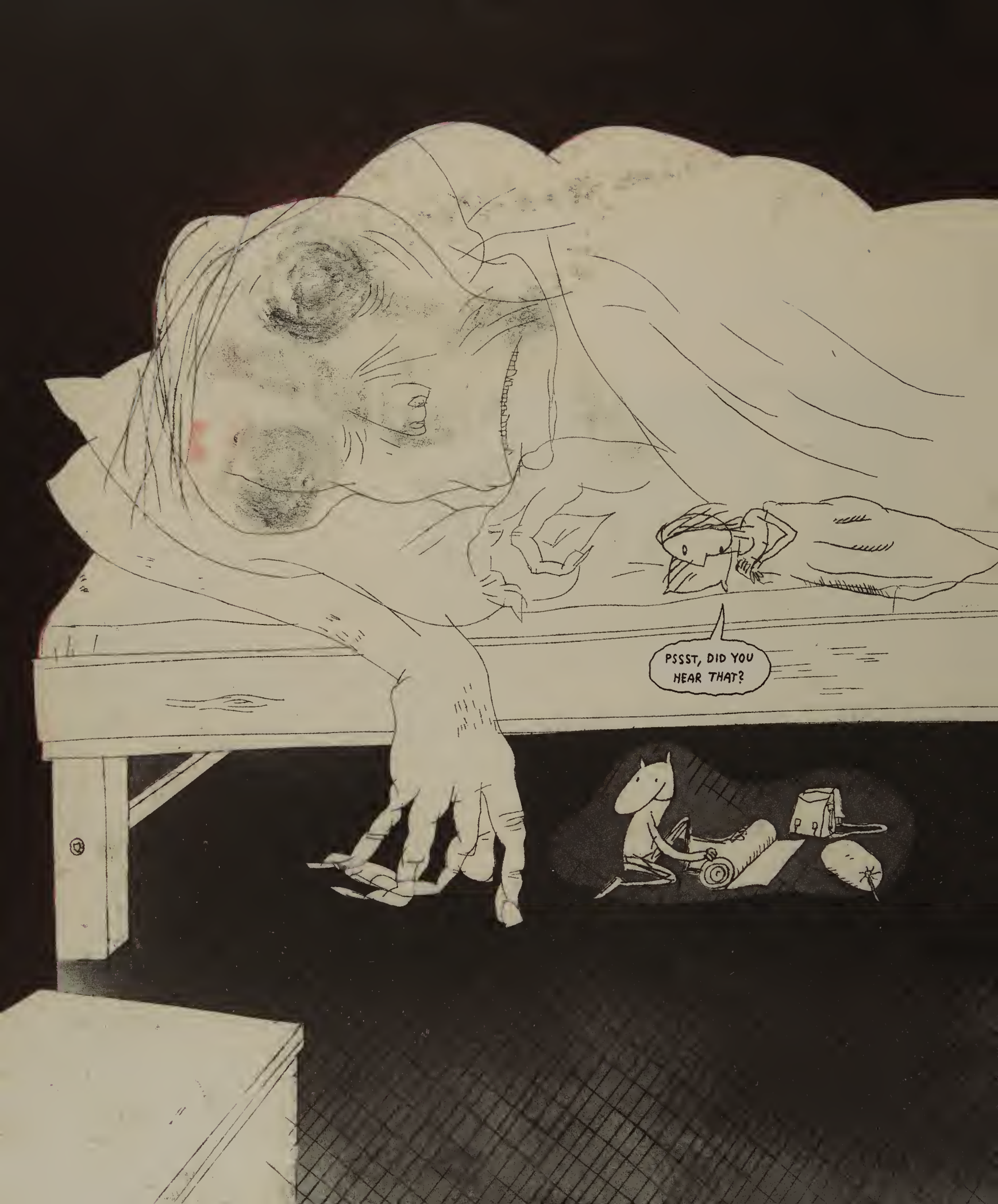
IT'S THE TROLL! QUICK, HIDE!

BLECH! WHAT'S THAT STENCH?


A MAGPIE FLEW BY WITH A HUMAN BONE AND DROPPED IT DOWN THE CHIMNEY. I THREW IT AWAY, BUT THE SMELL MUST HAVE LINGERED.
BUT ISN'T IT TIME TO SNUGGLE UP IN OUR PAJAMAS? AREN'T YOU TIRED, MY DARLING TROLL?

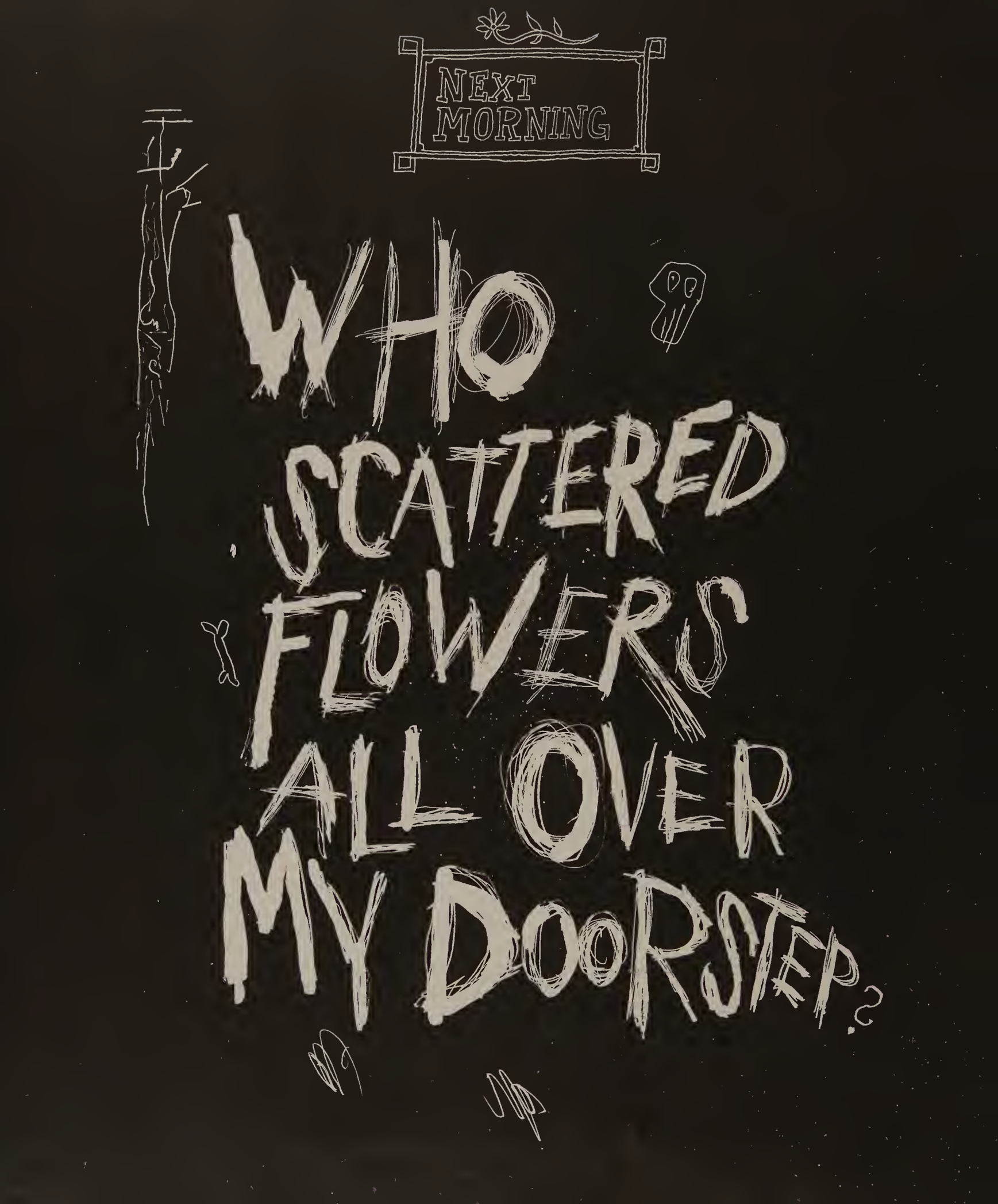
THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN WANTING TO ASK YOU, DEAR TROLL, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I DARE.

WHAT'S THAT?
I'M WONDERING WHERE YOU'VE HIDDEN YOUR HEART.
NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.
IT'S RIGHT UNDER THE DOORSTEP.

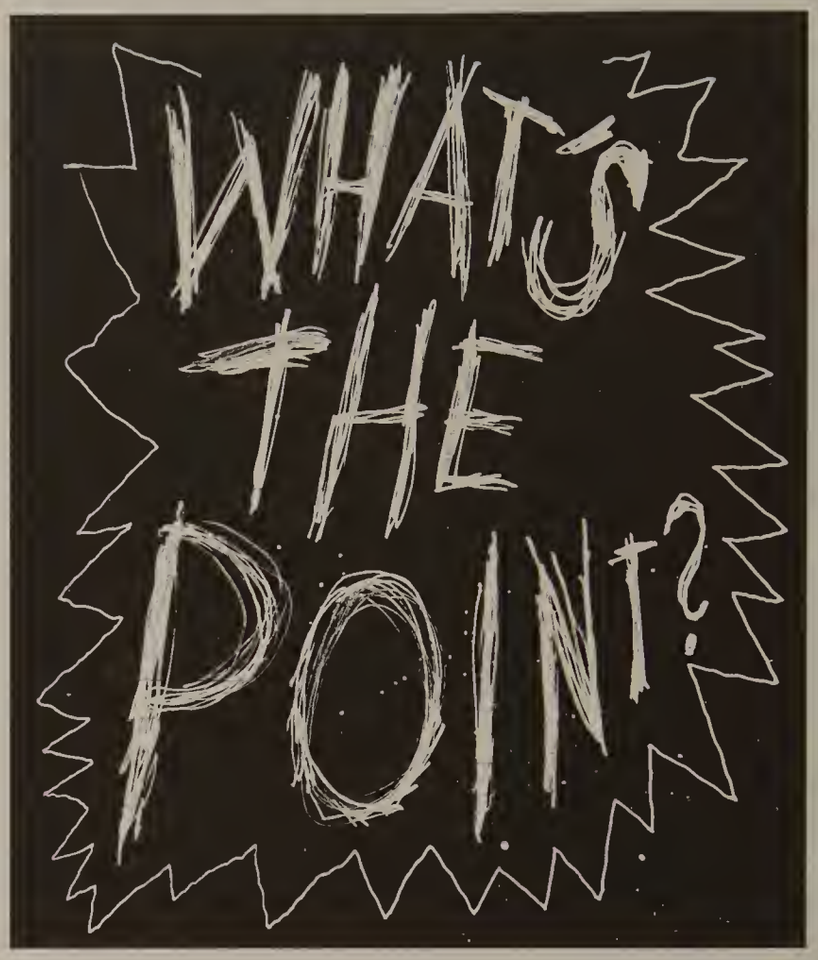

PSSST, DID YOU HEAR THAT?

ON THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, PRINCE FRED AND THE PRINCESS SNUCK AWAY AND LOOKED UNDER THE DOORSTEP FOR THE HEART.

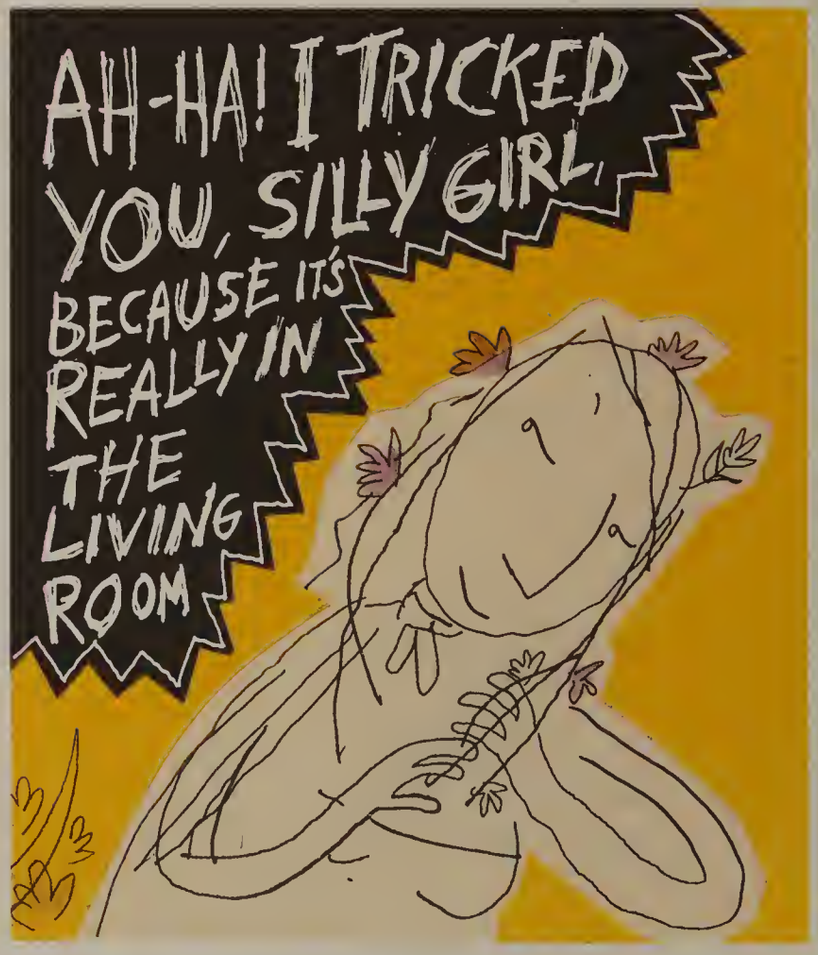
THEY GATHERED THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS THEY COULD FIND AND SCATTERED THEM OVER THE DOORSTEP. THEN THEY WENT BACK TO SLEEP.


NEXT MORNING
WHO SCATTERED FLOWERS ALL OVER MY DOORSTEP?

OH, I'M AFRAID THAT WAS ME.


WHAT'S THE POINT?

IT'S JUST THAT I LOVE YOU SO MUCH, TROLL. NOW THAT I KNOW YOUR HEART LIES THERE, I HAD TO SCATTER FLOWERS.


AH-HA! I TRICKED YOU, SILLY GIRL. BECAUSE IT'S REALLY IN THE LIVING ROOM

THE DAY AND EVENING PASSED, WITH PRINCE FRED STAYING OUT OF SIGHT.
IT STILL SMELLS OF HUMAN BLOOD IN HERE!
COME AND EAT YOUR PORRIDGE, DEAR. IT'S DELICIOUS.
RICE
RICE
RICE
RICE
RICE

TONIGHT, WE'LL FOOL HIM AGAIN.

PSSST!

ON THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, WHEN THE TROLL WAS FAST ASLEEP, PRINCE FRED AND THE PRINCESS SNUCK OUT ONCE AGAIN TO LOOK FOR THE HEART.

I HAVE TO USE THE BATHROOM.

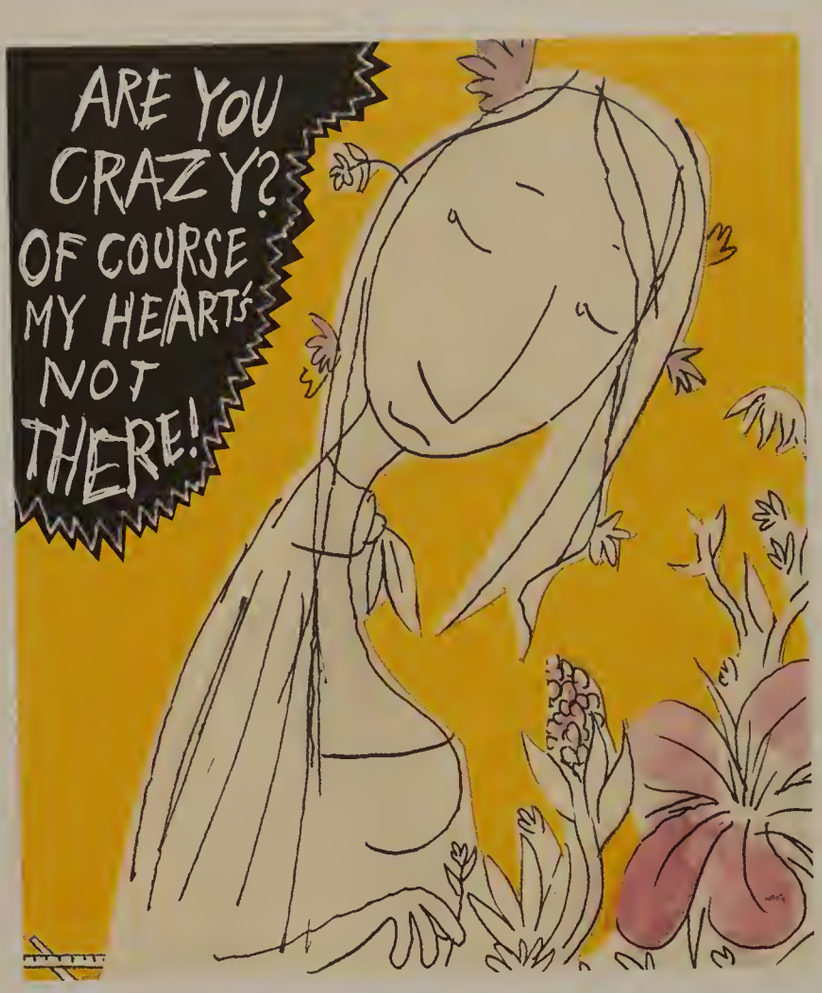
YOU TOOK YOUR TIME. THE CUPBOARD'S OVER THERE.

NOTHING HERE.
WE'LL HAVE TO DO THE SAME AS LAST NIGHT.

ONCE AGAIN, THEY GATHERED FLOWERS AND DECORATED THE CUPBOARD. THEN THEY WENT BACK TO SLEEP.

WHO'S THE IDIOT WHO DECORATED MY CUPBOARD WITH FLOWERS?

NOW THAT I KNOW YOUR HEART LIES THERE, I HAD TO DO IT, DEAR TROLL, SO DEEP IS MY LOVE FOR YOU.

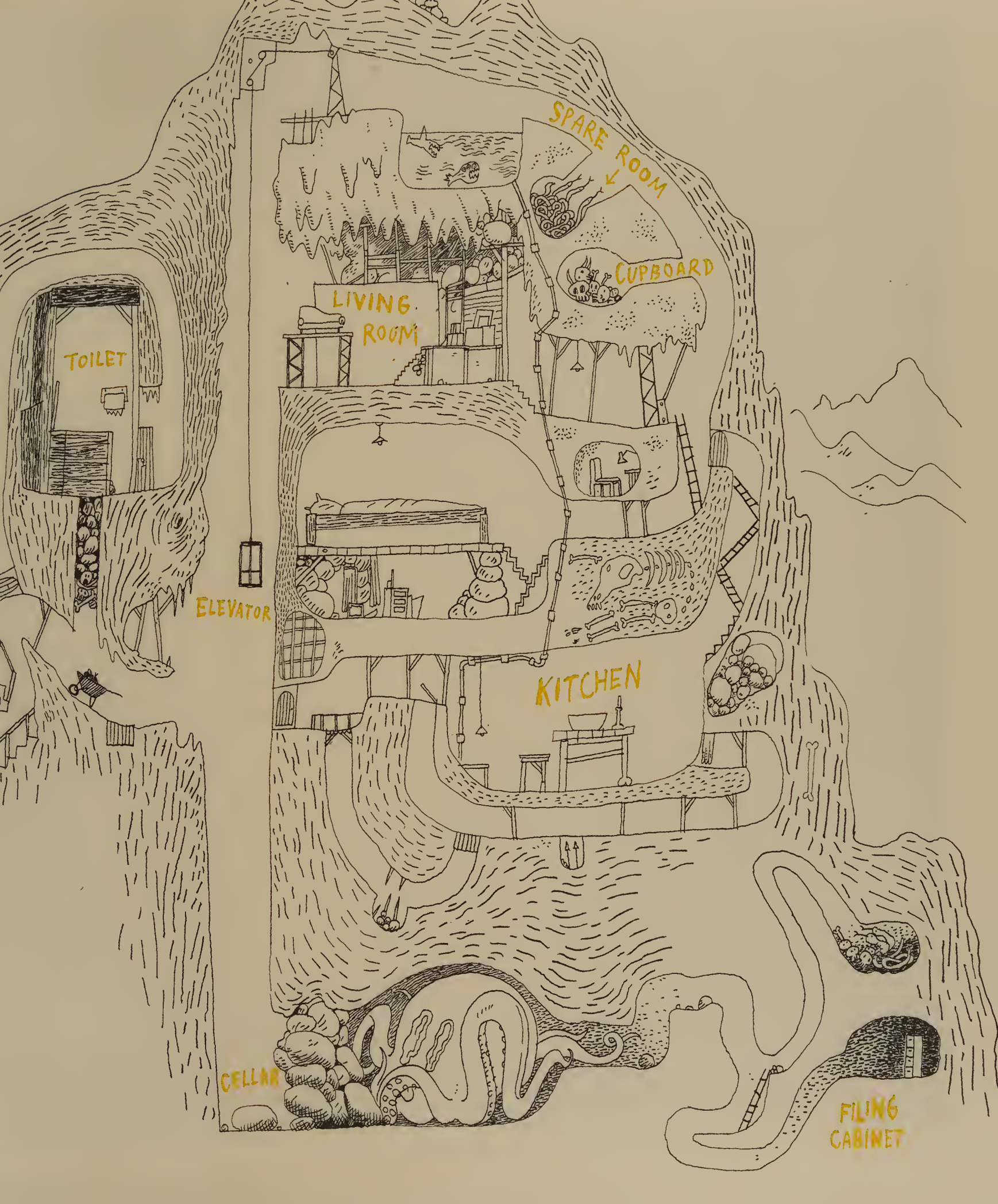

ARE YOU CRAZY? OF COURSE MY HEART'S NOT THERE!

YOU TOLD ME IT WAS.

YOU'RE A SILLY GIRL AND YOU'LL NEVER FIND OUT WHERE MY HEART LIES. AND DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!
OH?

BUT AS THE TROLL WAS A BIT OF AN IDIOT HIMSELF, HE COULDN'T KEEP FROM BRAGGING.

HE WENT ON TO TELL THE PRINCESS ABOUT THE PILE OF BIG BOULDERS THAT LAY DEEP AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CELLAR. AND HOW BEHIND THE BOULDERS THERE WAS A CAVE, GUARDED BY AN ENORMOUS OCTOPUS. AND THAT AT THE BACK OF THE CAVE THERE WAS A FILING CABINET AND IN THE BOTTOM DRAWER, UNDER THE LETTER H, THERE WAS A JAM JAR, THE LID OF WHICH WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE. AND IT WAS IN THIS VERY JAM JAR THAT HIS HEART LAY.


SPARE ROOM
CUPBOARD
LIVING ROOM
TOILET
ELEVATOR
KITCHEN
CELLAR
FILING CABINET

THAT NIGHT, WHILE THE PRINCESS AND THE TROLL SLEPT, PRINCE FRED TOOK THE ELEVATOR DOWN TO THE CELLAR.
STOP IT!
YOU'LL NEVER MANAGE!
BURP!

THERE HAS TO BE A WAY TO GET INTO THE CAVE.
YOU KNOW THERE ISN'T.

I NEED SOME COFFEE.

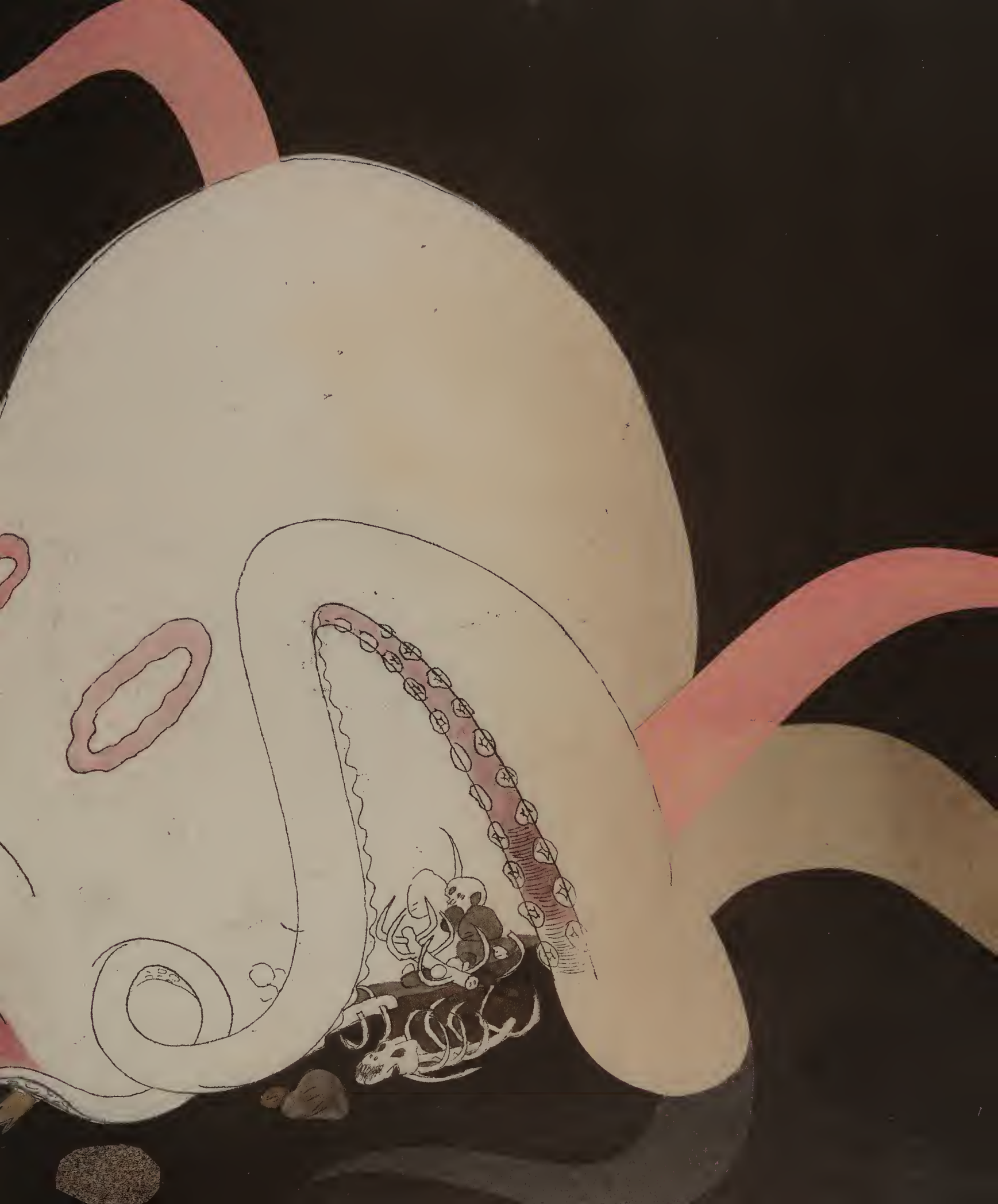
I NEED HELP FROM SOMEONE.

THE ELEPHANT!

HELLO, OLD FRIEND.

THE ELEPHANT LIFTED THE BOULDERS OUT OF THE WAY SO PRINCE FRED COULD ENTER THE CAVE.

NOW THERE'S YOU.



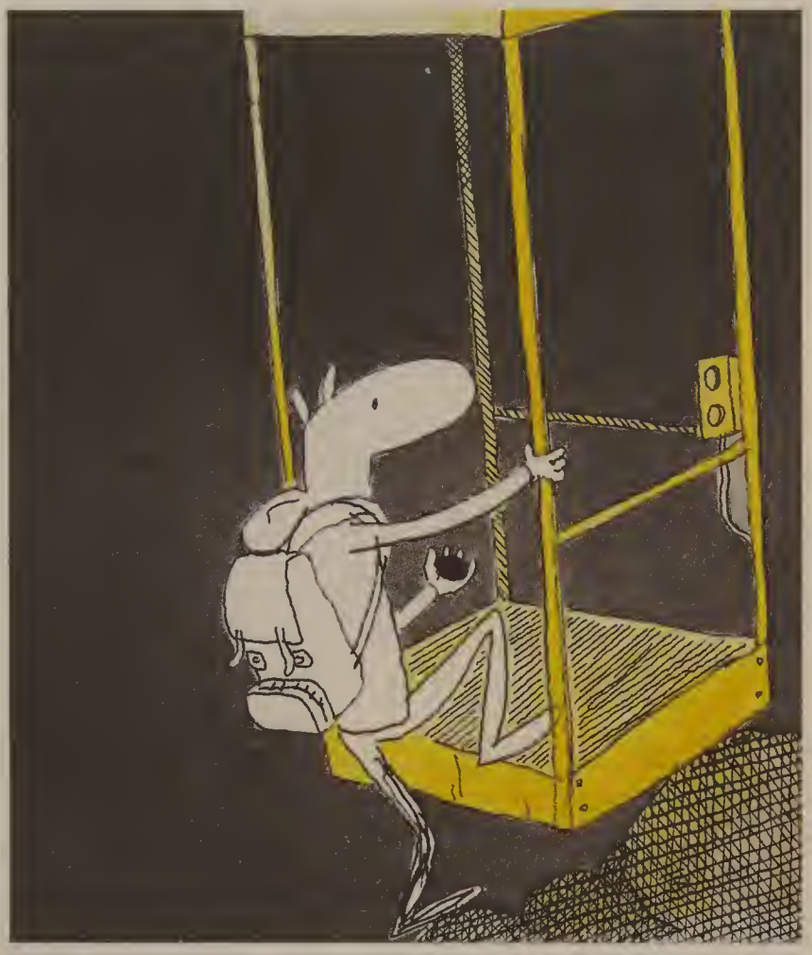
AH, I THINK I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU.

THAT'S A TINY HEART
FOR SUCH A BIG TROLL.

HMM, IT'S WORTH A TRY.

CAN YOU HELP ME WITH THIS?

CAREFULLY, THE OCTOPUS OPENED THE JAM JAR SO PRINCE FRED COULD EXTRACT THE TROLL'S HEART.



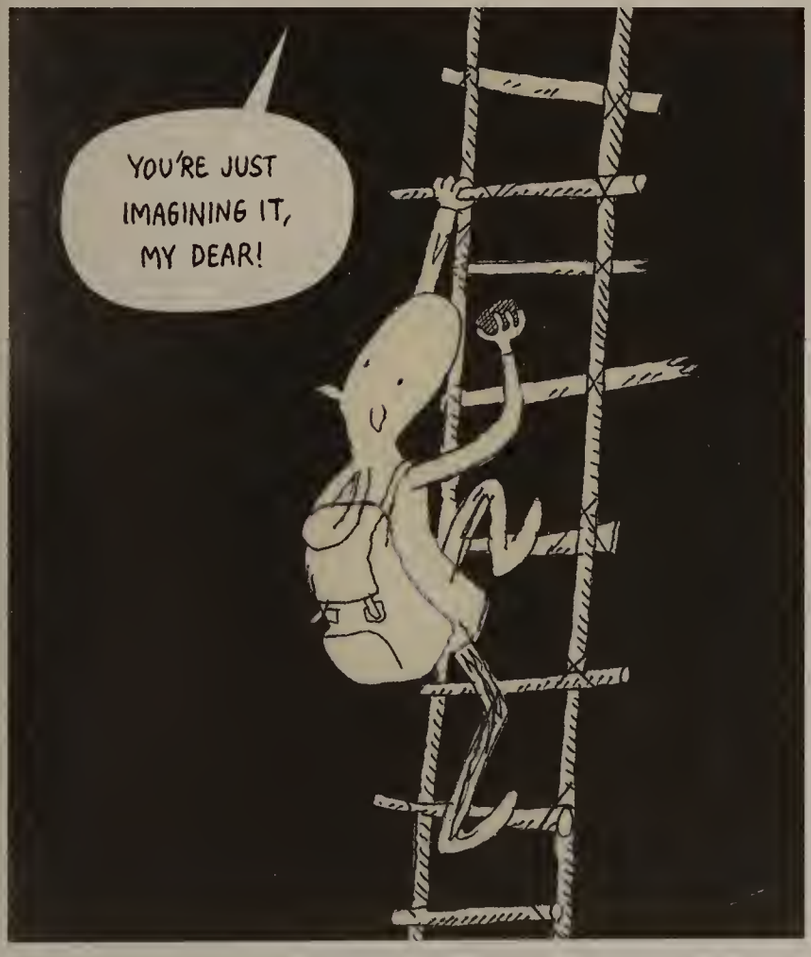
IT'S NOT WORKING.
CLICK CLICK

THE ELEVATOR WON'T BUDGE. MAYBE MY HORSE CAN HELP ME.

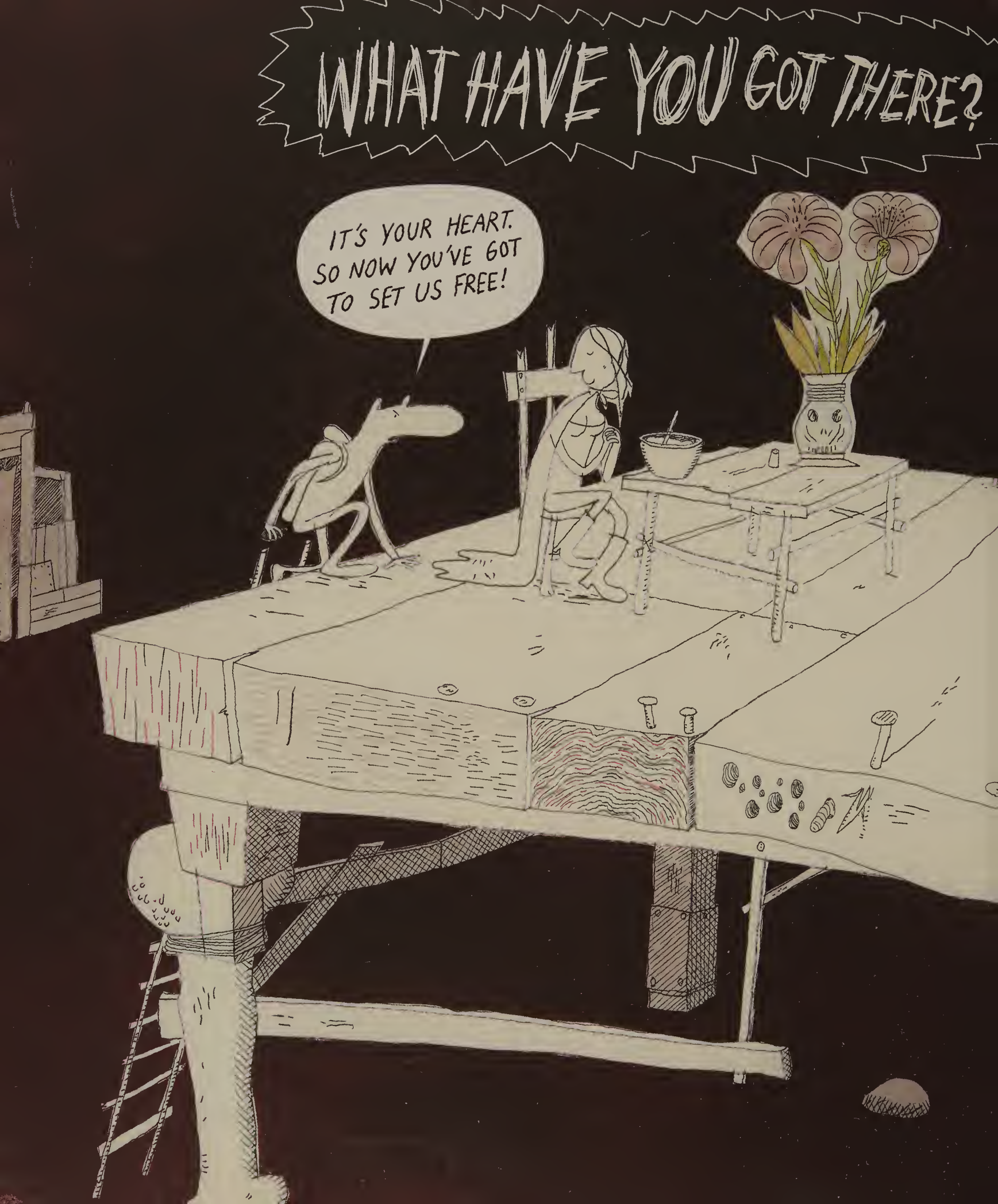
PRINCE FRED CONCENTRATED ON HIS HORSE AS HARD AS HE COULD, AND THE ELEVATOR STARTED TO MOVE.

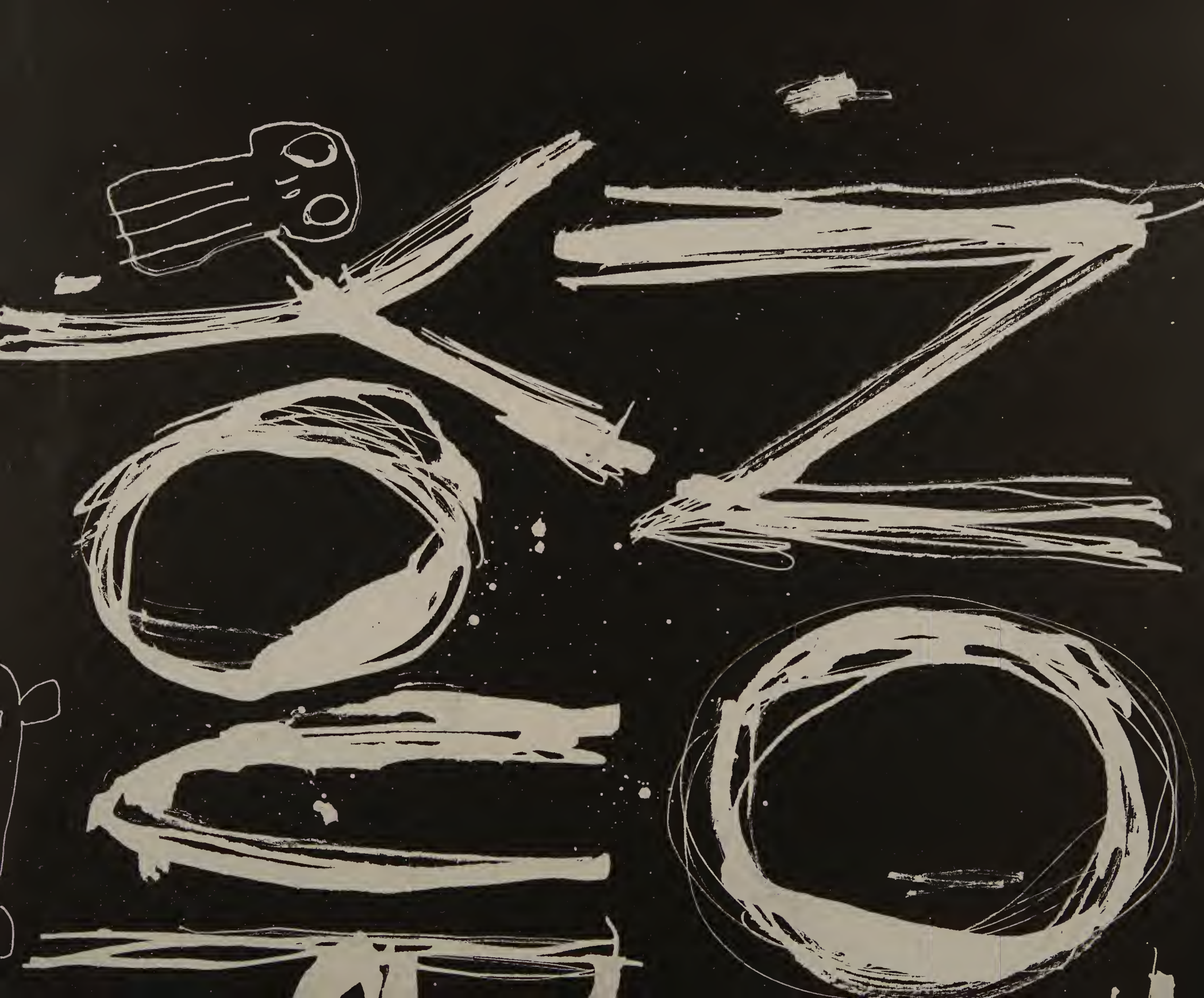
IT'LL ALL END IN TEARS. DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU.

IT STINKS OF HUMAN BLOOD IN HERE!

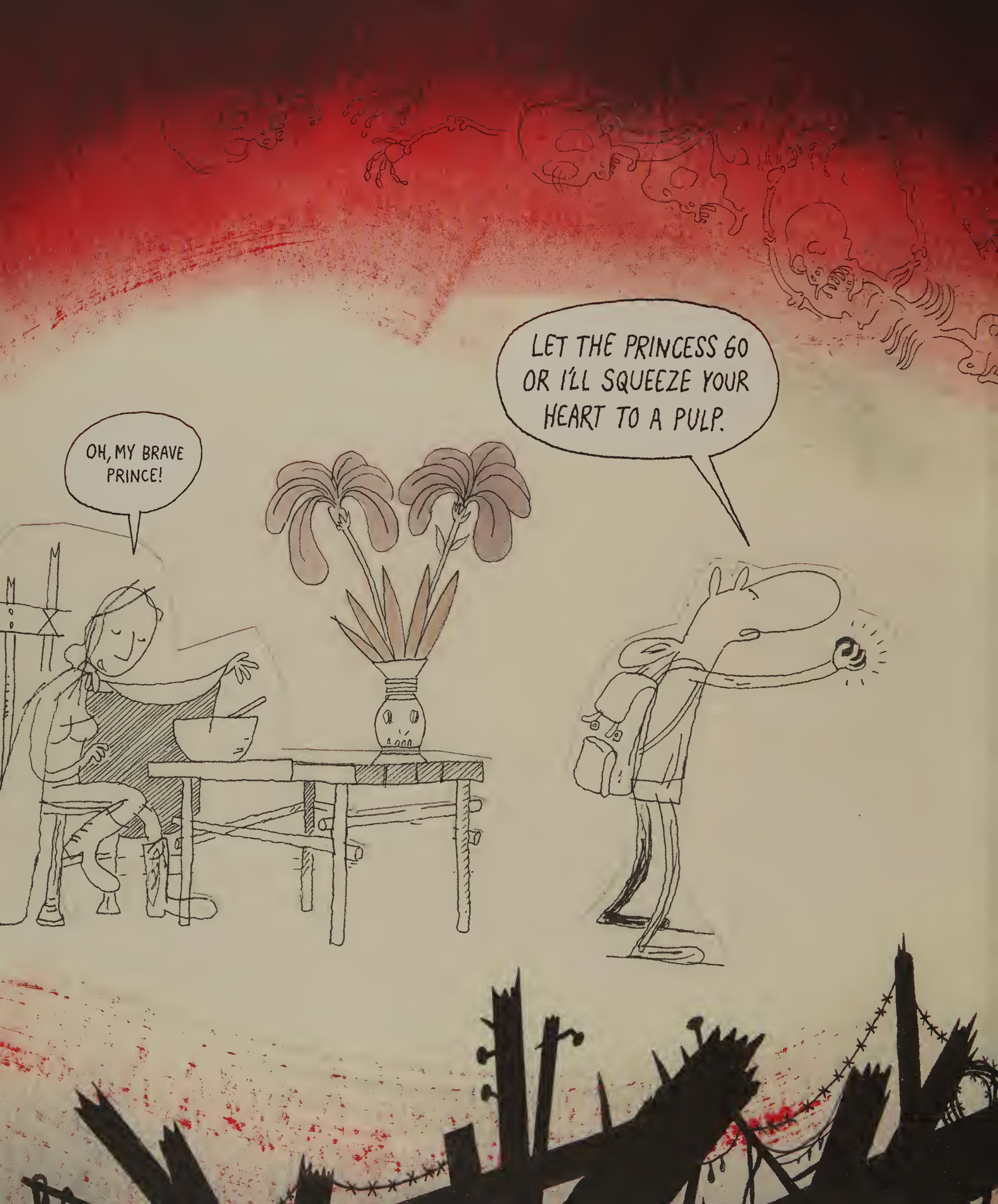

YOU'RE JUST IMAGINING IT, MY DEAR!

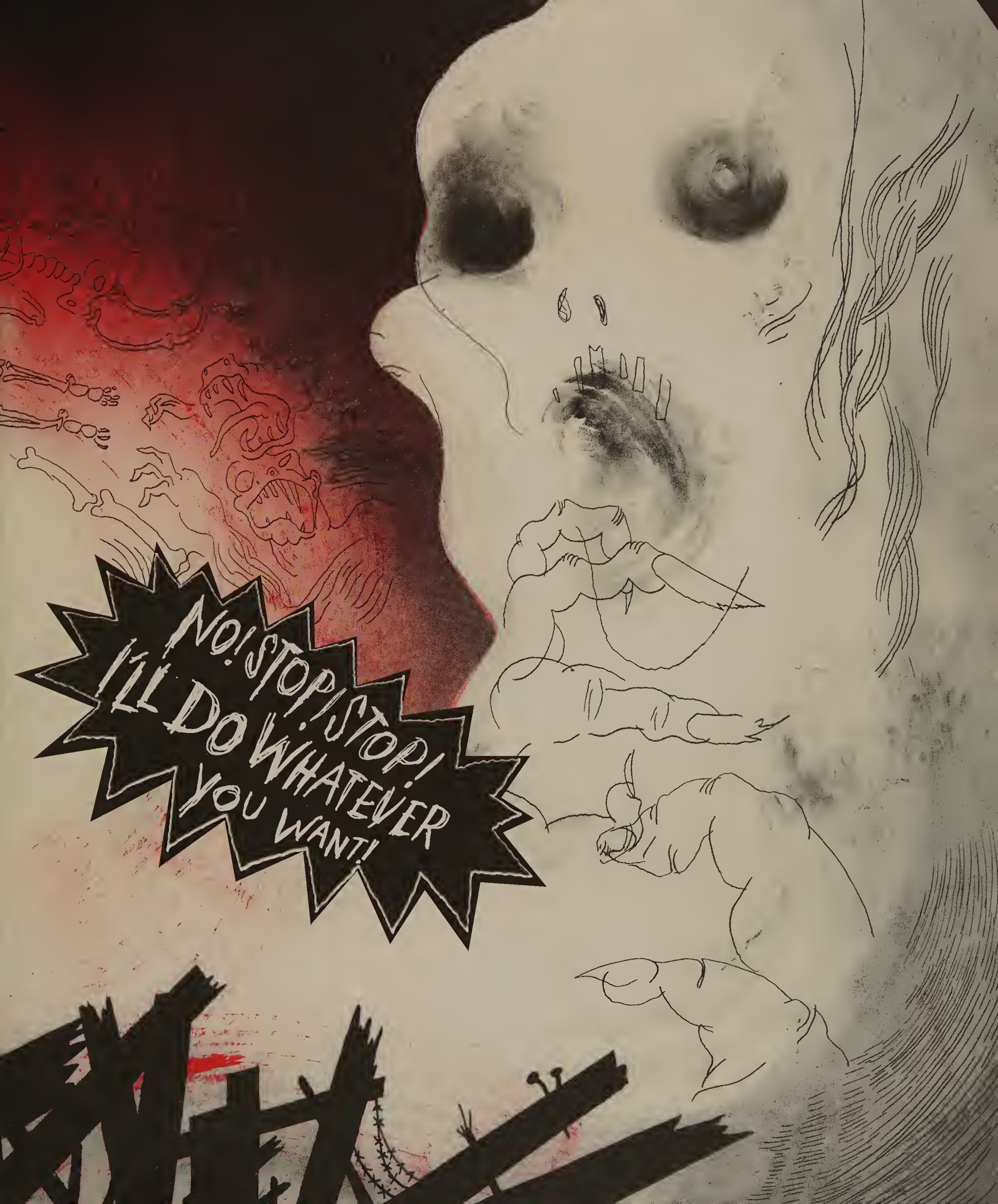
HEY, TROLL!


WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE?
IT'S YOUR HEART. SO NOW YOU'VE GOT TO SET US FREE!



TOY


OH, MY BRAVE PRINCE!
LET THE PRINCESS GO OR I'LL SQUEEZE YOUR HEART TO A PULP.


NO! STOP! STOP!
I'LL DO WHATEVER
YOU WANT!

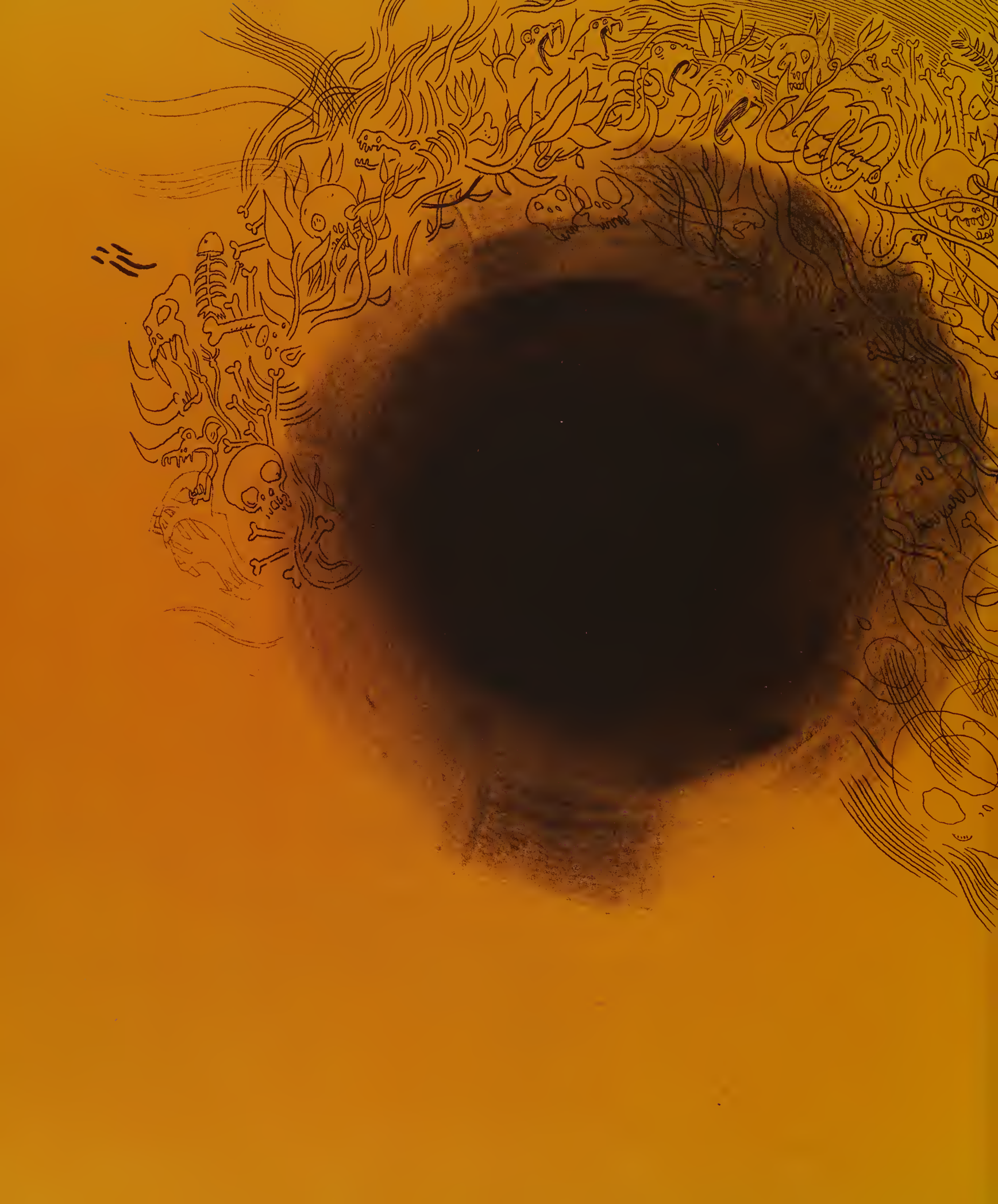
IT'S LOCKED.
GIVE ME THE KEY TO THE DOOR.

HERE'S THE KEY. BUT YOU CAN'T ABANDON ME, PRINCESS, AFTER ALL I'VE DONE FOR YOU.
OH, YES I CAN.

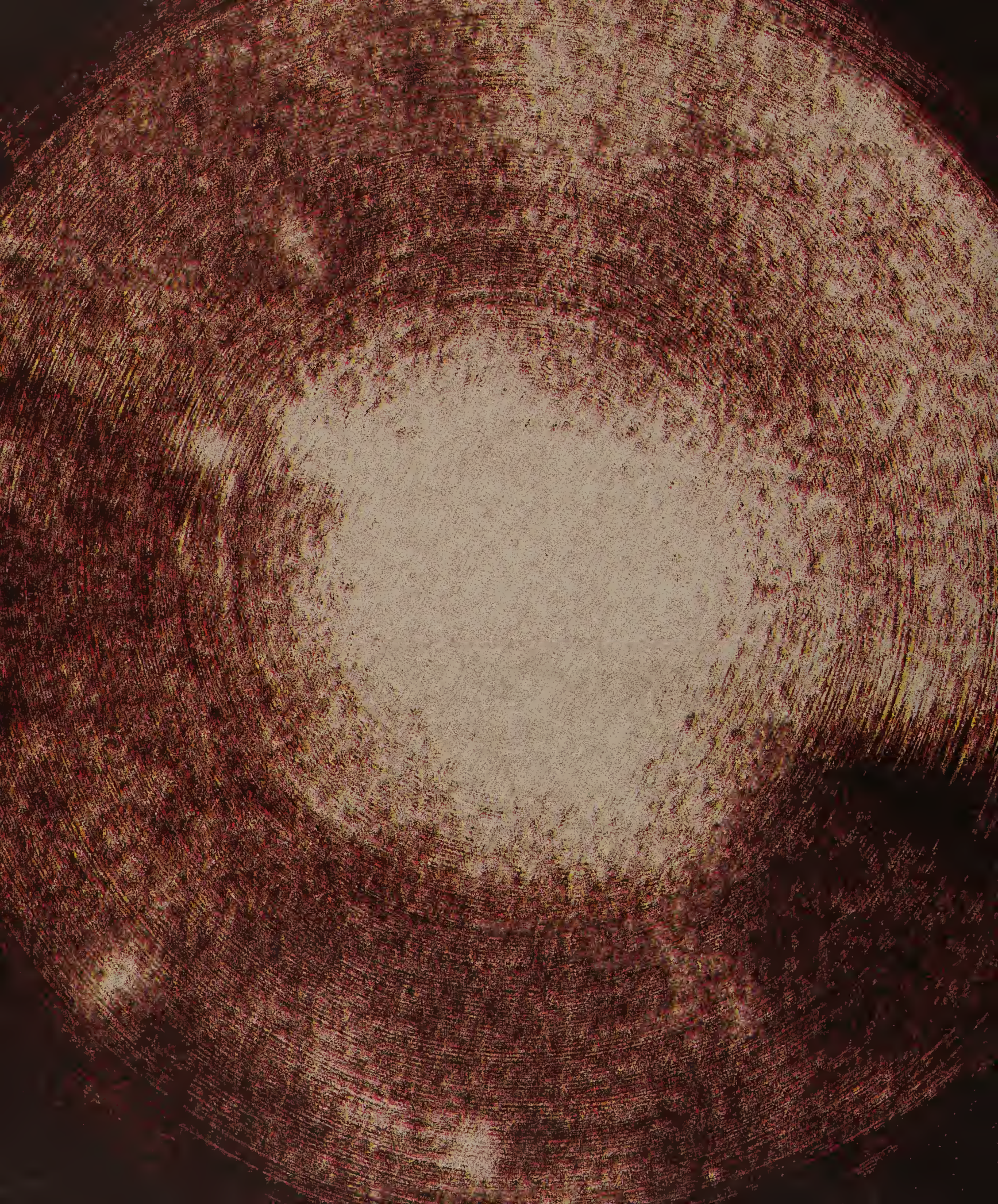
SET MY BROTHERS FREE, OR I'LL SQUEEZE YOUR HEART TO A PULP.
WHAT, ARE YOU RELATED TO THAT LOT?

NOW YOU'RE FREE.
GIVE ME MY HEART!

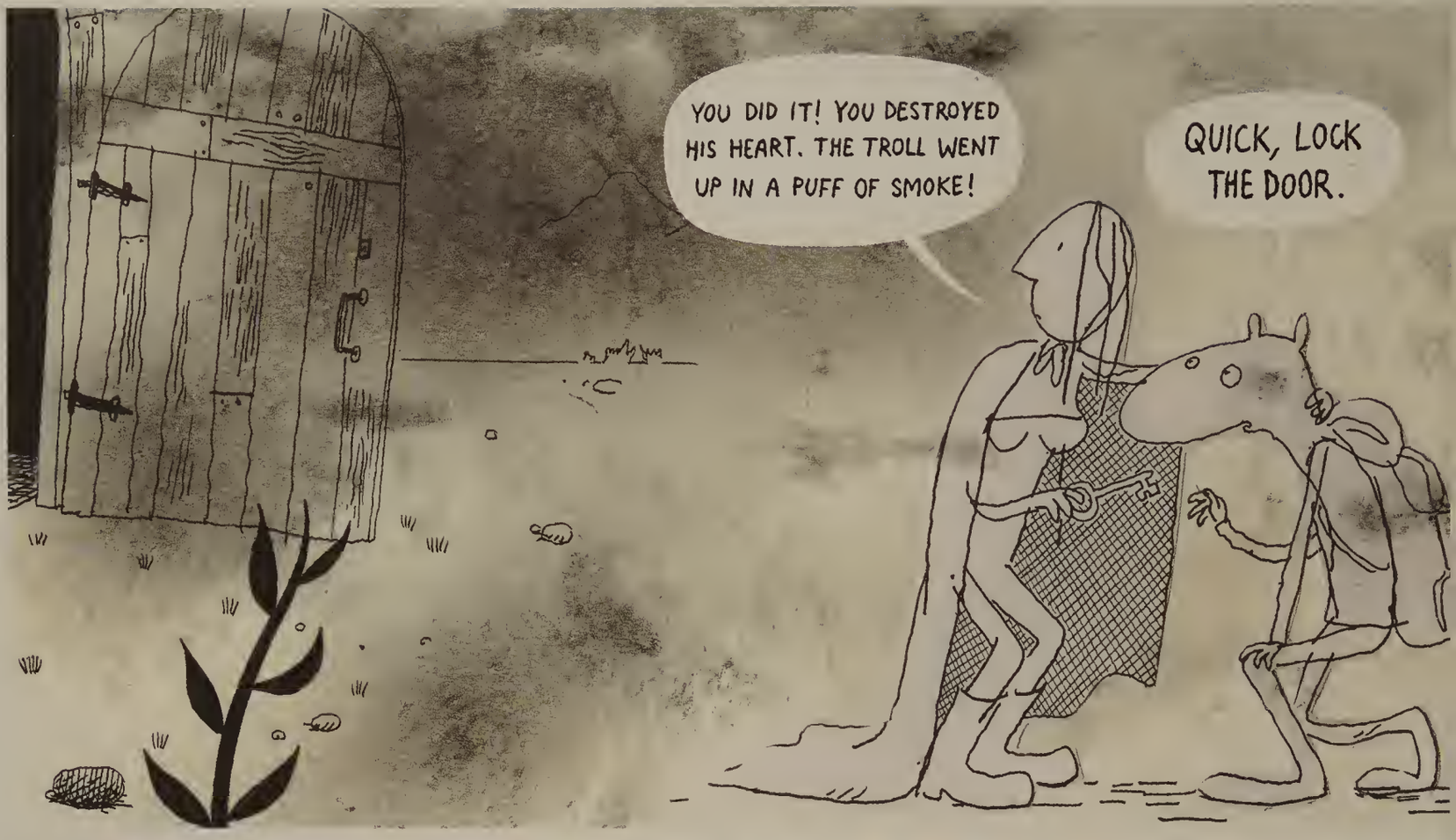
GIVE ME
MY HEART!



YOU HAVE TO DESTROY HIS HEART OR WE'LL NEVER BE FREE.



WHAT HAPPENED?


YOU DID IT! YOU DESTROYED HIS HEART. THE TROLL WENT UP IN A PUFF OF SMOKE!
QUICK, LOCK THE DOOR.

JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE.

JUST SMOKE.
LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING TO HIS HEART.

THERE'S SOMETHING SPROUTING FROM IT.

A PLANT.

THIS IS TOO WEIRD. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.

THE PLANT OUTSIDE THE CAVE GREW TO AN ENORMOUS SIZE. PRINCE FRED AND THE PRINCESS DESCENDED THE MOUNTAIN TO WHERE HIS HORSE WAS WAITING FOR THEM.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR BROTHERS?
I'M SURE THEY'LL FIND THEIR WAY HOME.
THAT'S WHAT I'VE SAID ALL ALONG.

FROM THEN ON, PRINCE FRED AND HIS PRINCESS LIVED TOGETHER MORE OR LESS HAPPILY FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.

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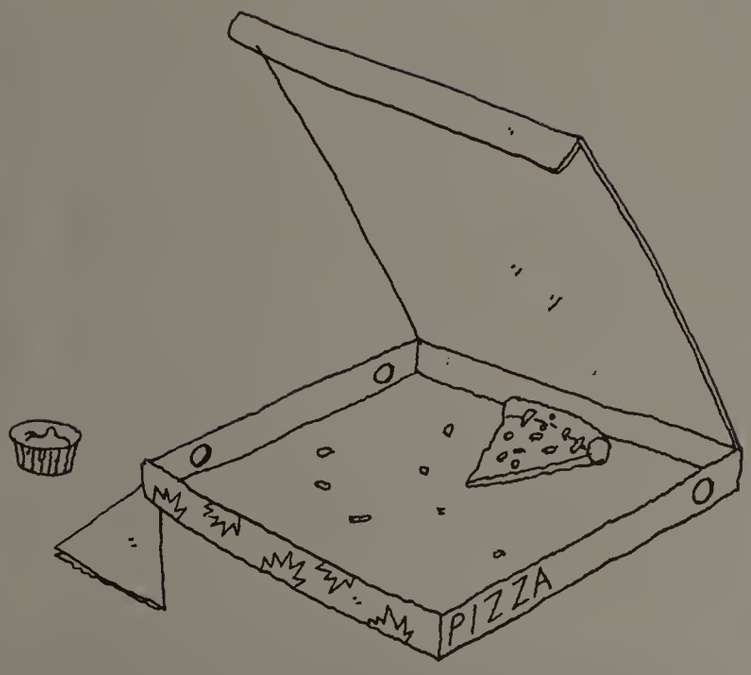

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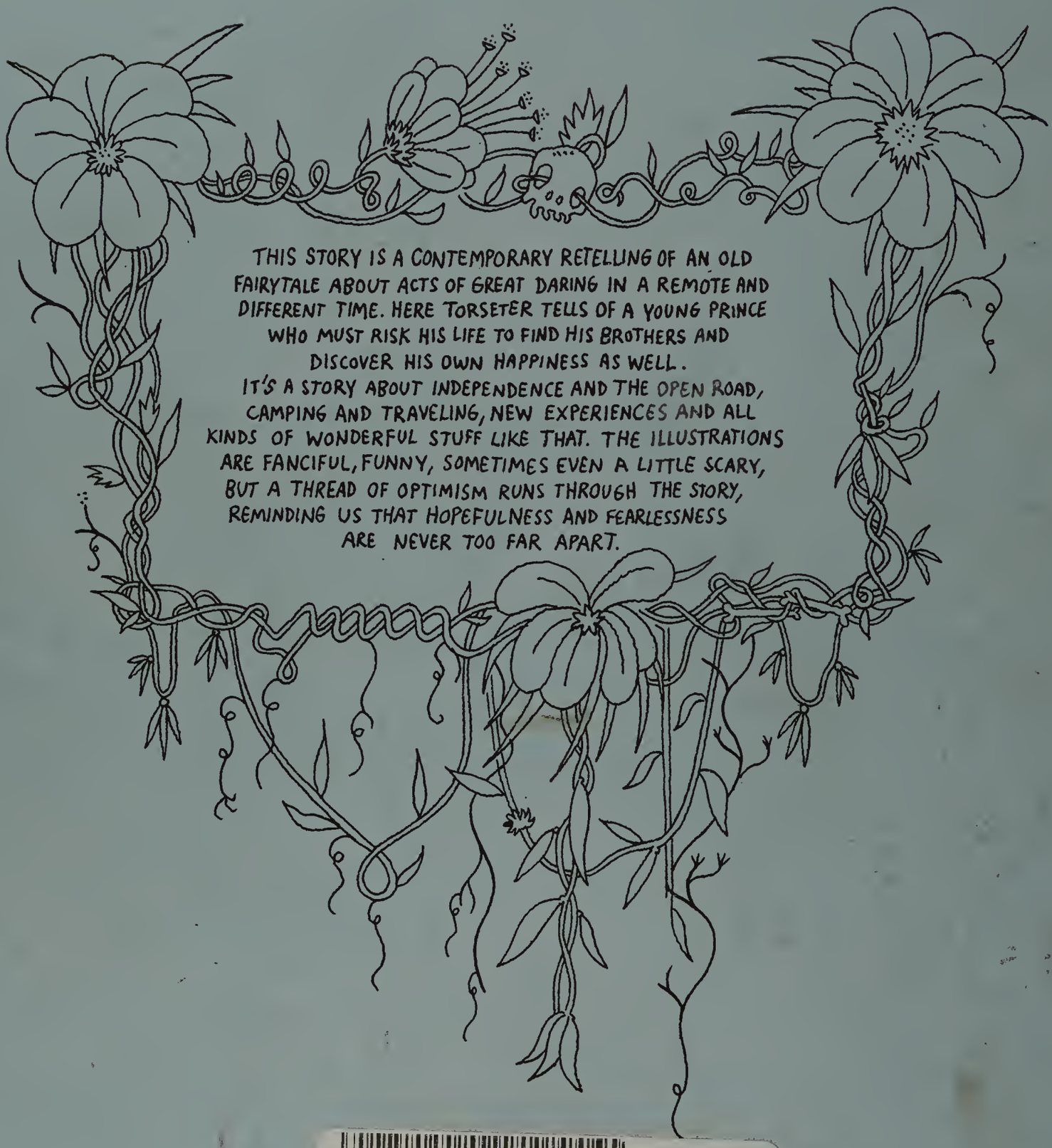

THIS STORY IS A CONTEMPORARY RETELLING OF AN OLD FAIRYTALE ABOUT ACTS OF GREAT DARING IN A REMOTE AND DIFFERENT TIME. HERE TORSETER TELLS OF A YOUNG PRINCE WHO MUST RISK HIS LIFE TO FIND HIS BROTHERS AND DISCOVER HIS OWN HAPPINESS AS WELL.

IT'S A STORY ABOUT INDEPENDENCE AND THE OPEN ROAD, CAMPING AND TRAVELING, NEW EXPERIENCES AND ALL KINDS OF WONDERFUL STUFF LIKE THAT. THE ILLUSTRATIONS ARE FANCIFUL, FUNNY, SOMETIMES EVEN A LITTLE SCARY, BUT A THREAD OF OPTIMISM RUNS THROUGH THE STORY, REMINDING US THAT HOPEFULNESS AND FEARLESSNESS ARE NEVER TOO FAR APART.

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